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ROBBIN ISLAND LEPER INQUIRES ABOUT MOLOKAI

Is Seeking to Ameliorate and Improve Conditions There and Writes to Superintendent McVeigh for Information.

Superintendent McVeigh has received a most interesting letter from a member of the leper colony on Robbin Island, Cape Town, South Africa. The letter is one of inquiry as to methods and conditions at the settlement on Molokai, and is prompted, apparently, by interest aroused by reports of medical treatment by Dr. Goodhue and Dr. Holeman, and by Jack London's descriptions of the Molokai Settlement. The writer is a leper, and has been for four years in the colony at Robbin Island. He is evidently a man of education and intelligence, and has presented a scheme for the improvement of conditions at Robbin Island which has sufficiently impressed the Cape Colony authorities to lead them to promise a commission to investigate the conditions and consider the plan. It is to get exact and complete information regarding Molokai that he writes, and he writes as one thoroughly in earnest. While not attempting to describe conditions on Robbin Island, the letter gives some interesting sidelights regarding them. The letter is as follows:

Robbin Island, Cape Town, S. A.
October 29, 1908.

Dear Sir:—Having read last year's reports on the work that is being done at Molokai and being a leper myself, I have thought that you would not think it impertinent in my writing to you. My object in doing so is to find out the methods you have used to get the Molokai Settlement into the present good condition it is. I may say I have read the account of Mr. Jack London's visit and the conditions he describes I would very much like to obtain here. I have made a scheme on very much the same lines as I fancy are in force with you before the Cape Colony government, and the Colonial Secretary tells me they are considering them, and has promised that he will appoint a special commission (before whom I am to give evidence) to inquire into the leprosy question. I feel that I must make this a long letter, as I want you to thoroughly understand the present conditions on this island. The whole island is about — acres in extent, and about — acres are given up to the officials and a large lunatic asylum for non-lepers. We have here as leper patients about 120 whites and about 600 Cape colored and raw natives, male and female. The males are in one compound and the females in another, and they are not allowed to marry. The majority of the patients are housed in large wards, no distinction being made, those in the last stages of the disease and those practically well (you will know what I mean) all being put together. We have about forty white attendants; also a gang of convicts, the former to look after the wards drawing rations, and the latter are employed in road-making, sanitary work, etc. Those patients that are willing to work are given small jobs, such as cleaning wards and looking after helpless patients, for doing which they are paid a few shillings monthly. We have two doctors, who go round these wards every day, but they do not do much in trying to stop the ravages of this disease; in fact, under the system in force here they have no time. We have no hospital, and a little equipment necessary for the carrying out of any work to alleviate the suffering caused by leprosy. Our food and clothing is good, and there is no stint in either. I am afraid I have not a very graphic pen, but I will try and point out what I think is wrong, and I hope you will help me with your advice, so that I may be able to put things properly before the commission. The ward system, in my opinion, is a bad one, as many are well enough to look after a small place of their own, and I would like to see the same system here as I think is in force at Molokai, and I would like you to give me some idea how to start. One great difficulty we shall have to get over will be the unwillingness of a lot of us to do anything for ourselves, as the system now in force here has been allowed to go on for years; in fact, ever since this has been a leper settlement. Force, of course, is out of the question. I feel that some inducement must be held out, and this is where you can help me greatly. How do you induce the patients at Molokai to accept their lot and to try to live as they would do at their old homes? What employment do you give them? What staff do you have to help you? If you could give me full information on these points, you would be continuing the good work you have done at Molokai in this place, and would have our heartfelt thanks. I feel that I am asking you to undertake a lot of extra work, but also feel you will help us, as you have your own people. I have shown your resident doctors' reports to a good many influential men in this colony; also to some doctors. The latter say that most of the reports are fables. This has greatly annoyed me. Perhaps you will be able to send me the last yearly report book on the island, and any other official information about the management and treatment of leper patients. Should this involve the spending of money, I shall be most pleased to forward you the same on your notifying me of the amount required. Another subject I would like some information on is about property acquired by lepers. I notice in the report I have a sale of the property of a leper. Here, if a patient wants private quarters, (the majority of these are two rooms, wood and iron, built in a row and in my opinion most unsightly) he pays half the cost, generally £50, and on his decease it reverts to government. I would like to know your system of obtaining property and disposal of same on death of owner. Do you allow marriage of patients? I think it would be the right thing to allow it here and

it would be a great inducement to patients to work and earn money to start housekeeping on their own place. At present there is a good deal of laxity in the domestic relations here and it is hard work trying to raise the moral tone under the circumstances. If you allow marriage please let me know who you allow and what restrictions, if any, are in force. What do you do in the case of patients misconducting themselves? Are they punished as under ordinary circumstances by fine or imprisonment? If the latter, is it with or without hard labor? And if the former how do you collect fines? I would like to know the extent of the country given over to the lepers and if you find it extensive enough for all purposes; and roughly how much it costs government to run the whole show. I am trying to get our S. M. O. to try Dr. Goodhue's Eucalyptus globulus treatment. We have plenty of the trees growing in the country. I would like to know about how long the patient has to take it before improvement is noticed? I have been using Chaulmogra all the time I have been here. I was in a very bad state but am now feeling wonderfully well and the swelling nearly all disappeared. I am now taking two teaspoonfuls of oil emulsionized daily, but have taken far larger quantities and I used to rub myself from head to foot with the oil every day; now I do it about twice a week. I have made great improvement, but many here cannot take the oil and this is why I want other treatments tried. I don't suppose Chaulmogra is curative but it is certainly remedial and that for the present is, I feel, all we can hope for. Would you ask Dr. Hollman if he would give me his opinion drawn from his experiences in connection with leprosy, as to whether when leprosy attacks the eye, all treatment is useless and the sight must go? This appears to be the opinion here. Nearly 80 per cent of the patients are suffering from eye complaints and nothing is done. During the four years I have been here as a patient not one eye has been examined ophthalmoscopically (don't know whether that word is right; it looks awkward). After reading what Dr. Hollman says in his report I believe lots could be done here and I would like him to give me his opinion, so that I could state it as his, before the Commissioners. I hope he won't think me too cheeky in asking this and that you will understand that why I am writing this letter is because I firmly believe the present conditions at Molokai would not obtain did not all the officials put their whole hearts into the work, and I feel sure when they do that, it is love that constrains them; and on that love I am trespassing and I feel sure I shall get some information from you that will go a long way towards getting things put in order here.

The Commission will be held in about four months' time and I would like information before then if possible; and please let me know if I may use your names in stating any information you may give me. Before closing I want to ask you to please shake hands for me with the old soldier mentioned by Jack London and tell him one old soldier salutes another. I served eighteen years in India and finished up my soldiering in the Boer war, which I was all through. I strongly suspect that I picked up this disease in India, but how I cannot say. Do you have any racial troubles amongst your patients? Here it is very strong. Whites will not co-operate with colored in anything and that will make it difficult to follow your example; but I think it may die down in time. I have wondered how you get your hands instructed. Did they know how to play before they came to Molokai? I think that must finish my queries for the present so will conclude hoping you will accept this letter in the same spirit in which it is written, and that you will be able to help me, and with all best wishes to all on the island, believe me sir, Yours faithfully,

JAS. WILLIAMS.

(It was through Father Maxims that I first heard about what was being done at Molokai. Our priest wrote to him for information.)

TO BE METROPOLIS

(Continued from Page One.)

intendent of Public Works, Mr. Campbell, where the water from the reservoir may be used to develop power to pump artesian water for the mains for household use. In that way the city is assured of absolutely pure water, while the adoption of such a scheme as Mr. Campbell suggests would add materially to the water supply. The water from the reservoirs, for instance, could be used altogether for irrigation after it had been used for power development. By a system of open irrigation ditches, such as are found throughout Salt Lake City and some other places, the gardens of the city except on the very highest levels could be irrigated. This water would be better for irrigation than the artesian water. It would be too expensive, of course, to put in another system of mains for the irrigation water, even if that were necessary.

Having an assured supply of absolutely pure and uncontaminated water for drinking and kitchen purposes and a big supply for irrigation, the water problem of Honolulu should be solved and in a very satisfactory manner. The growth of the city depends on the solution of that problem. I regret very much having to leave Hawaii. I have enjoyed every minute of my stay here. Your islands are delightful and I have met so many charming and agreeable people that I would welcome an excuse to stay longer. I have traveled a great deal,

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